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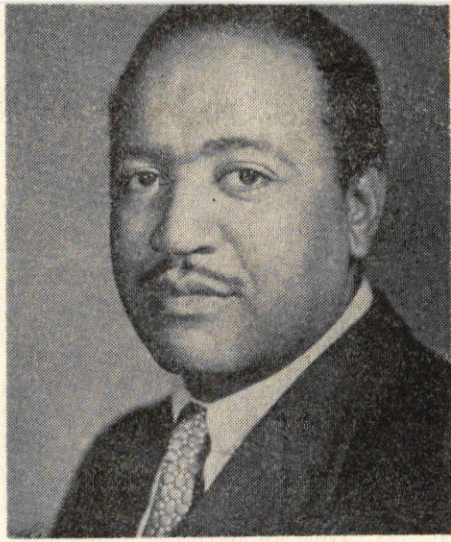

BENJAMIN J. DAVIS

UPSURGE IN THE SOUTH

The Negro People Fight For Freedom

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

THIS PAMPHLET contains the abridged text of the report delivered by Benjamin J. Davis, National Secretary of the Communist Party, at the meeting of its National Committee, held in Chicago, Illinois, March 25-27, 1960.

Formerly a defense attorney in the historic Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon cases, Mr. Davis is widely loved and respected not only as a national leader of the Communist Party, but as a militant fighter and spokesman for the Negro people in their heroic fight for equal rights. Together with the late Peter V. Cacchione, he was elected in 1943 to the New York City Council, and re-elected in 1945 with one of the highest votes by any candidate.

He is one of the Communist leaders convicted in the notorious Foley Square "thought control" trial and imprisoned during the worst years of McCarthyite reaction.

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To sum up, in at least six respects the Negro American Council is of central importance: 1) in combatting discrimination in the ranks of labor, perhaps the biggest expression of which is the failure to organize the South; 2) in strengthening the Negro-labor alliance; 3) in battling the jim-crow system against the Negro people; 4) in raising the influence of the Negro workers in the Negro people's movement; 5) in bringing economic issues to the fore thus helping to merge the Negro people's movement with the struggle of the working class vs. monopoly; and 6) in involving labor in the struggle for ever expanding democracy.

Our Party as a Party has to find a special way of dealing with an increasing incidence of anti-Communism in certain circles of the Negro movement—pointing out that not only is it divisive, but it robs the movement of its independence. History shows further that anti-Communism destroys individuals, organizations and nations, defeats its exponents—and doesn't stop communism anyway. Unity and united action against the common jim-crow foe is the main thing. We Communists are quite confident of the verdict of the future on socialism and capitalism.

Comrades, we must never forget that our Party is a revolutionary Party and every obligation that social developments thrust upon us must be fulfilled with that sense of responsibility. We must become a militant fighting Party afraid of nothing. With respect to the South, our slogan should be: Unconditional support of the Negro people's struggle for their full citizenship. Our Party's slogan for Negro rights should be: Full and immediate equality for the Negro people, political, economic and social—and I emphasize especially social equality, which is at the core of the student lunch-counter sit-ins. We must aim high while keeping our feet on the ground. We must be a Party of big ideas, while every little act that will relieve the suffering of the Negro people or advance their cause must be dearest to our hearts and raised to the level of state importance. We must be the Party of the poor and downtrodden. We must gear ourselves to a style of work so that each comrade can ask: What did our Party do today or this week to advance the cause of Negro liberation? If we do, can there be any doubt that we will build our Party and our press?

whole question of white chauvinism, in connection with the mass movement for Negro rights and within the Party, in the light of the present struggle for Negro rights. That it get out an outline on it, examining also the various aspects of nationalism and its currents among the Negro people. The purpose is to promote a conscious struggle against white chauvinism, its expressions and effects. We should revive the importance of Paul Robeson's work—and perhaps reprint chapters of his book in pamphlets.

3. That our Party initiate and/or support a campaign of boycott of all South African goods, and of breaking diplomatic relations with South Africa, including U.N. action. That our Party in all states, with special emphasis on the united front, aim at bringing into being all kinds of forms which will more concretely tie together the struggles of the Negro people in the South with the anti-colonial struggles of the Negro people in Africa and with the Latin-American liberation movements.

4. That our Party give special attention to youth, particularly Negro and student youth with a view to solidarity actions on all campuses. That the Party give attention to women's activity, noting first of all the new organization of NOW, recently organized in connection with the struggle for integration in schools.

5. That special attention be given to the fight for the freedom of Henry Winston, which is part of the racist cruelty against the Negro people in the U.S.A. and elsewhere.

Preparations for the founding conference of the Negro American Labor Council in Detroit in May are under way. This proposed Council has captured the imagination of the Negro workers, but preparations for the conference are seriously lagging in almost every state. It faces serious problems, as well as opposition from Meany and Reuther and other bureaucratic labor officials. It needs forces, funds, and the sort of support that will help steer it into the direction of the kind of conference and organization that will be a powerful force for the militant united action of all Negro workers against jim-crow in all its manifestations. It can be a mainstay of Negro-white unity, and the backbone of the whole Negro people's movement, forging an all-class unity that no other section of the Negro people can.

It is the most important symbol in the whole Negro people's movement in respect to the Negro-labor alliance.

UPSURGE IN THE SOUTH

THE NEGRO PEOPLE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

By BENJAMIN J. DAVIS

Our country is in the midst of a national crisis. It is at once a constitutional and a moral crisis. It extends the length and breadth of the land, deep into the guts of every aspect of American life.

It is symbolized in the fact that the right to drink a cup of coffee like a decent human being has suddenly become the front-line test of the whole jim-crow system. All over, the people are debating: to drink or not to drink, on the premises or off, to sit or to stand.

More basically the issue is: shall the Negro people in the deep South be upheld in their epic struggle for constitutional liberty and human dignity—or shall a tiny minority of Dixiecrat racists continue to flout the majorty of the American people in open defiance of the law of the land?

Shall America, at last, 200 years late, do that which is moral and just for true democracy—or shall it deteriorate further, and remain the quintessence of hypocrisy and immorality in the eyes of its own citizens and in the eyes of all decent humanity?

Upon the determination of these issues rests the fate of organized labor, of democracy and of the American people for generations to come. Time has run out on the American jim-crow system and only evil, destruction, and national catastrophe can result from all attempts to maintain it.

This crisis arises not from the heroic Negro students and their people in the South who are waging a magnificent struggle for

simple human decency and elementary liberty. It arises not from their determined action for freedom, as is claimed by the criminal Dixiecrats and their apologists in the monopoly press, or in the person of the peanut machine politician Harry Truman.

On the contrary, the southern Negro students are providing for all Americans the biggest single hope of the renewal of democracy in our country. They are bringing idealism to life and are adding a new dimension to patriotism. To argue otherwise is to say that it was not the evil Hitler that brought turmoil to the world, but rather the anti-fascist coalition that destroyed him.

The present crisis arises out of the brutal attempt by the illegal Dixiecrat regimes to maintain at all cost the vicious jim-crow system without the federal government doing one material thing to stop them. The failure of President Eisenhower and the Congress, in accordance with their sworn oath of office, to intervene in behalf of the Negro people and their white supporters in the South, is tactit encouragement to the Dixiecrat tramplers of the federal constitution.

The meaning of this go-ahead signal from Washington is not lost upon the Dixiecrat officials. The Patersons, Hollinses, the Talmadges, Eastlands, and Colemans have opened a reign of terror against the embattled Negro students unprecedented since the spawning of the Klan during Reconstruction. They are itching to drown the Negro upsurge in its own blood.

Tear gas and fire hose are being turned against unarmed young Negro men and women. Baseball bats are used against Negro teen-age girls and police dogs are set upon matronly and elderly Negro women. Shotgun fire and medieval brandings cut into the dark flesh of innocent young Negroes, and brutal beatings maul the bodies of their young white supporters. In Orangeburg, S. C., 350 young Negro students, men and women, teen-agers and young adults, are herded into a stockade like common cattle. Further horrors against the Negroes have been vividly depicted in the writings of editor Jim Jackson and others in *The Worker*. Most of these crimes are committed in the name of law and order, as in South Africa. One must take note of the barbarous bombing of the Jewish synagogue in Gadsden, Ala., and the attempted massacre of Jewish worshippers attempting to escape the flaming building.

tactic to prevent sectarianism, isolation and the line of least resistance. But if regarded abstractly, it can lead to paralysis of action, lack of initiative and even to isolation.

The lunch-counter sit-ins in the South were started with five Negro students in Greensboro, North Carolina, and now a whole people are in motion. Would we have had the courage and savvy to start on that basis (not in our own name. Perish the thought! Especially if the five had been Party members!). Would we have counselled others to do so? I seriously doubt it. And yet it worked. We might have substituted our "no" for the masses' "yes."

The question is not whether we do things alone, whether a few of us or whether in our own name. The decisive question is: Whether what we do meets a need and a readiness of the people to struggle for it. If the masses are not ready to struggle for it, then we can knock together all sorts of broad committees, and they will not set masses in motion. If they are ready to struggle for it, then let us not paralyze ourselves, repeating: "Don't substitute ourselves for the masses." Comrades, the answer to this problem is to sink our roots among the people in action and to be able to sense and learn from their moods. Where there is starvation, a good action at one relief bureau can set a whole community in motion.

The thing is to step up our work among the masses, lead and participate in struggles, broadening them and at the same time making the Party, its program and leadership known to the people.

This leads finally to the practical proposals and goals designed to mobilize and check our Party's progress in the next few months.

1. That we review the work and status of the Party in the South in the light of the new situation, and that the initiative already taken by the Secretariat in this regard be extended to the first meeting of the Board. We need, in my judgment, a many-sided "operation Dixie" which will lead to the revival of our Party there, and to the strengthening of the Negro people's movement and their white allies there. The Communist Party has to become a factor on the main scene of battle. Otherwise, it will not justify its existence. We must answer to history for our works in this situation.

2. That the national center deal fundamentally with the

A little more than two months ago our convention placed before labor and the nation the task of completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South. We haven't even gotten our convention resolution before the people, and the issue is already joined.

One of the biggest expressions of the remnants of revisionism in our ranks is tailing after the Negro people's movement. Nor should we think dogmatism and sectarianism will correct this. But we should not confuse speed and impatience with dogmatism. The comrades want to speed up things and do what's right and correct too. The upsurge of the Negro people has hit our Party also, and we should not be afraid of it, but encourage it and arm it with the correct ideological and practical weapons. Fear doesn't win social battles. It's fear that should be thrown into the ruling class—not into ourselves.

We cannot recover that zeal and enthusiasm without which great things cannot be accomplished until we get on top of the tempo of events, foresee and prepare for them. Such is the style of work cut out for us by the Negro people's movement today. Things explode today, comrades. They don't just leisurely unfold.

Secondly. The advocacy of our Party is for a peaceful transition to socialism, which will end the necessity of a mass upsurge to drink a cup of coffee like a human being. Such a transition cannot be achieved except through the struggle for the constant expansion of democracy. The heart of that struggle in the U.S. is the Negro question. Events happen so swiftly today, we cannot put off dealing with this question until the distant future. The struggle for democracy in the South will have profound effects upon peaceful transition. And we know that the final and irrevocable victory of the Negro cannot take place until the working class has state power and socialism is established.

But every reform sought by the Negro people must have our undying sacrifice. We must have the scientific skill to give leadership at every stage of the struggle for these reforms, making greatest use of the united front and the independent role of our Party. We must help the masses to draw lessons from every particular experience and prepare the way for the next higher one.

Thirdly, we must consistently re-examine current as well as old concepts. For example, "We must not substitute ourselves for the masses." Now, comrades, that is a sound generalized

Law and order—according to the federal constitution—have collapsed in the South. In several southern states, the official Dixiecrat regimes have degenerated into racist gangsterism worse than that of Al Capone or "Legs" Diamond. Where these officials dare not carry out the dirty work themselves, they conspiratorially delegate their responsibilities to the Klan, the White Citizens Councils and other terrorist gangs and lash them into action with inflammatory white supremacy speeches.

The Federal Government intervenes all right but not in the South and not in behalf of these patriotic Negro students. Our august State Department throws its weight around in California, first in behalf of the convicted rapist Caryl Chessman and yet again—just last Saturday—in behalf of the grandson of Chiang Kai-shek to save him from a three-day jail sentence after he recklessly used a California highway as his private speedway. These two sterling examples, one might say, demonstrate how American capitalism upholds individual freedom.

We Communists are often pilloried with the slanderous accusation that we seek to discredit our country, its courts and other official institutions. This is not true. What is true is the reality that the Dixiecrat mockery of the Constitution is degrading America in the eyes of the world. What could besmirch the courts of this country more than their utter impotency against the lynchers of Mack Parker, their trumped-up political crucifixion of Martin Luther King and Adam Powell, and their imprisonment of the innocent and crippled Negro Communist leader, Henry Winston!

The highly-touted effects of Eisenhower's recent world tour have all but been wiped out by the anti-Negro violence and hate in the South. The world can see that the U.S. is a paradise for free enterprise, but not for freedom; that it is not really the land of the free and the home of the brave, but rather the prison-house of the brave, and the native home of the Klan and the White Citizens Councils. Not even a handshake with Khrushchev could save Eisenhower and his tongue-tied protege Nixon from the just wrath of the people who see them playing politics while the Constitution is on fire. The shame of our nation extends far beyond the water's edge and the monopolists and their Dixiecrat agents must blame only themselves, and their super-profitable jim-crow system.

END JIM CROW

Obviously, the evil approach of the Dixiecrats—abetted by the federal government—to solving this national crisis, will not work. It is making it more acute, and if carried through will lead the nation to disaster. The only satisfactory solution is a people's one—the outlawing and ending of the jim-crow system now, from Mississippi to Maine, from California to New York.

Because the time has come for the determination of this question, the whole country is aflame with this, the central domestic issue of our time. The battle is being waged in every domain —the Halls of Congress, in the 1960 electioneering, in federal, state, and local governments, at lunch-counters, in libraries, parks, and schools, in the streets—in all parts of the country involving all strata, classes and sections of the American people. The whole country racks with the titanic proportions of this epic struggle.

The most decisive area to look for a democratic solution of this crisis is in the deep South where a people's revolt is taking place. Here the upsurge of the Negro people has entered a qualitatively new stage. The Negro people are fighting not only for their human dignity but to save this nation—which cannot be done without the full, unconditional equality of the Negro. They are doing much more for democracy than all the Senators and Representatives, President and Vice-President lumped together.

This is a gigantic movement which will continue to grow in the spirit of the resolution adopted at our 17th National Convention—a struggle to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution, unfinished and betrayed after the Civil War 100 years ago. It is a struggle by the Negro people to bring to life the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments—the right to vote, hold public office, to secure justice in the courts, to sit, eat, and work where they please—in short to enjoy, under the Constitution, all the privileges and rights of their fellow white Americans, south and north. The lunch counter sit-ins are only the beginning. To secure these rights, would mean an end to the foundation upon which the illegal Dixiecrat regimes rest—and a rebirth of America. This is a Democratic revolution in which the Negro people seek to change their semi-slave status into one of full citizenship.

If the central target of the Negro movement in the South

the consequences of a Dixiecrat success. The victory of the Negro people in the South—of constitutional democracy—is the minimum our country can pay for avoiding a horrible national disaster.

THE TASK OF THE PARTY

The first job of our Party—from top to bottom—is to get into this historic struggle with both feet—South and North. If we are not mere partisan observers and commentators or a holding operation—as rejected at our 17th Convention—now is the time to show it. History will not wait—we have to seize it at the flood. We say this is the central social issue of our country but we don't act like it.

I'm sure our Party members and leaders are active in various ways—and perhaps in some localities decisively on this issue, and in many vital ways that don't show. But let us ask ourselves as a leadership, candidly and self-critically: Are we anywhere near the limit of our capacity? Are we as yet all-out? Do we as yet grasp this unique moment? Do we see what's new and growing? Do our members and sympathizers feel the confidence and conviction which our strength and guidance should impart? Have we set free the creative initiative of our clubs? Let's begin to change these things at this meeting.

Our membership is relatively small and must not be overwhelmed with too many tasks in this situation. We must try here to single out a few—and especially to try to find the key one or two. But one of the biggest mistakes we can make is to underestimate the importance of our Party, its potential, its unity of understanding, purpose and action. One of the biggest errors we can make is to underestimate the influence and standing of our weakly circulated *Worker*. This applies doubly to the struggles of the Negro people.

Our General Secretary, Gus Hall, pointed out that the mandate of our 17th National Convention was to speed up the tempo of our revival. Did we fully understand that? This means at least to me, that on every front of human struggle the events and decisions of weeks, months and sometimes years are telescoped into a few days. This is true in the Negro movement in the South today.

in hand. Nationwide support to the present Negro upsurge in the South must make it unequivocally clear that the jim-crow system cannot continue, the Dixiecrats cannot continue in the same old way, and that the federal government must step in.

Just as the victory cry in the Civil War had to become "Abolish slavery!" so in 1960 it has to become: *End the Jim Crow system now!* It makes no difference whether the spark of social change begins with the right to drink a cup of coffee or to read a book in the public library.

In 1861 the weapons were arms. In 1960 it is the combined political, social and economic power of labor and the American people unitedly acting in a favorable world setting.

Lenin pointed out forty years ago that one cannot foresee all the different co-relationships of forces between the working class and the national movements. Tomorrow it may be the working class in the front lines—but today it is the Negro people's movement. That is a hard fact of life which cannot be refuted by the sterile repetition of classic principles. William V. Shannon, New York columnist, wrote the other day: "What the crusade of organized labor was to the thirties, the crusade of the Negro is likely to be to the sixties." And Shannon is no Leninist!

The upsurge of the Negro people in the South is objectively a powerful force for peace. And the varying peace forces of our country belong at their side. Conversely, the struggle for peaceful coexistence and disarmament—and the possibility of victory—produces the most favorable conditons for expanding democracy and improving living conditions in our country.

As far as the monopolies are concerned the Negro people in the South are hitting them at the source of their Dixiecrat political power, and in the heart of their enforced low wage standards.

The success of this struggle in the South is not a matter of choice, that is, take it or leave it. The battle has been joined. The Dixiecrats are not only resorting to violence and bloodshed. They're hurriedly adding more laws and measures for even more restrictions and repressions against the Negro, authorizing more violence and bloodshed in order to maintain the old outmoded jim-crow way of life. That is their inevitable course. The recent massacre in South Africa should be a warning to America of

is segregation, it is because, in common with the struggles of the Negro people all over the country, segregation is the last refuge of the jim-crow system. The Dixiecrats recognize this with a vengeance. The revolutionary intensity of this struggle may ebb and flow, even as it has since the Montgomery bus boycott, but always it will rise again, renew itself, and reach higher levels until the final triumph.

The lunch counter sit-ins are being led by the intrepid and self-sacrificing Negro students. They began with five Negro college youths staging a sit-down strike in Greensboro, N. C., and have in a month's time exploded into more than scores of cities in South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, Maryland, and the District of Columbia. The movement is still spreading. Developments are so vast and swift, that one scarcely has time to record them, much less assimilate them. If these students are representatives of a lost generation, then let's pray that all American youth get lost. But what started out as a student movement, has now become a people's crusade, with the dominant single-minded current among the Negro people being the urge to freedom.

First and foremost, the Negro people in the South have taken the struggle for democracy into their own hands. Never before in the twentieth century have they challenged the jim-crow system in its own lair, in open, direct conflict with the illegal Dixiecrat regimes, through mass action and mass defiance of the jim-crow laws. This new upsurge is not a Montgomery bus boycott nor even a Pilgrimage or youth march to Washington, as historically important as these demonstrations were. It is an organized, inspired and more aggressive movement which seeks, through its own strength, to exercise the democratic rights guaranteed under the Constitution. Southern Negro youth have drawn the only lesson possible from the experience of having gone to Washington three times, 75,000 strong, only to be rebuffed by the President of the United States who refused even to see them, and who refuses to uphold their constitutional rights. Must a man let himself drown in a sea of jim-crowism because another will not save him? The Negro people have decided to save themselves. They will not permit the Dixiecrats any longer to grind them into dirt to keep from interrupting Mr. Eisenhower's relaxed and unruffled golf schedules.

Secondly, this upsurge is a classic example of the creative ingenuity of the masses. The Negro students have created new forms, employed new tactics, developed new leaders—all designed to meet the necessities of struggle in a concrete, specific hostile environment against a barbarous class foe. They move under the banner of non-violent resistance and civil disobedience. Their ideological leader is Martin Luther King, around whose Gandhian philosophy they have built a whole code of struggle behavior. In Alabama and South Carolina, the insignia of the revolution is the Bible, the singing of a prayerful spiritual, "God Bless America," or even the "Star Spangled Banner." College campuses have become barracks of freedom fighters and Negro churches "subversive" arsenals of struggle. The Dixiecrat officials see "red" at all of them, and lapse into paroxysms of rage.

These new forms of struggle enable the southern Negroes to enlist the neutrality of large sections of the whites, the aid of others, and enable the world to see who are the practitioners of violence, terror, and hate in the deep South.

Thirdly, one of the most prophetic new aspects of the situation is the increasing numbers of white youth who are supporting and participating in the Negro people's struggles. They come from both the South and North. They participate on picket lines, go to jail, endure sacrifices and brutalities imposed on their fellow Negro students. It is generally conceded that the white youth participating in the struggle today is the largest number in the entire modern history of the Negro people's struggle in the South. It is one thing for these youth to go to Washington, out of the hearing of their parents and the powerful racist pressures of their homeland; it is another for them to brave this struggle in the midst of these fierce counter pressures at home. This is the greatest testimonial to the self-interest of the whites who are beginning to recognize in the chains that bind the Negroes, the dead hand of the past upon them. If Negro-white unity can be developed in the South, it should cover America like the dew covers Dixie.

Fourthly, a new power has come upon the scene in southern life—the Negro youth, in particular, the student youth. The brilliant role they're playing requires a much more extended examination. They more than any other reflect a complete

in the South are joining young people" in Africa especially. It is one fight of the Negro people all over the world against white supremacy and for freedom. Picket lines in front of Woolworth's in New York march directly to the South African Consulate armed with the demand of the NAACP nationally that this country break diplomatic relations with South Africa.

In the United States this struggle has the moral support of labor and the majority of the American people. There is not a picket line in the country to support the Dixiecrats. But solidarity actions with the Negroes are spreading to almost every campus and city in the country.

The Negro students and masses in the South have both a perspective and a theory of victory though plainly they're still grappling with many big complicated tactical questions. Their principal weapon is the power of their own mass action.

It is clear, further, that they are seeking through mass action a constitutional way out of this crisis by urging the enforcement of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments—but immediately! This path logically leads to the exhaustion of every facility of the Constitution—the reduction of representation of the southern states in accordance with the 14th Amendment, the establishment of a republican form of government in the Dixiecrat states as guaranteed by the 4th Section of Article IV of the Constitution. The southern-wide conference of the NAACP attorneys last week are using the lunch-counter sit-ins under the 14th Amendment, challenging the right of the State power to enforce privately sponsored segregation and discrimination.

These possibilities all lead in the direction of compelling the use of the federal power, which is necessary and decisive—both in relation to relief from the violence and terror and also to secure a democratic victory. The base for that role of the federal government is expanding in the South, although southern democratic forces are too weak to achieve that victory by itself. The need is for the executive and legislative branches of the government to be brought into action as well as the judiciary.

The student-led Negro masses are demonstrating that the jim-crow system cannot be maintained in the same old way. The federal government is maintaining a pose of "non-interference and neutrality" which aids the Dixiecrats, counting on the Dixiecrats in an election year being able to keep the situation well

is a spectacular example for raising the peace movement to a comparable level.

The Negro people's movement has just about knocked out Lyndon Johnson—the man who is on both sides of the civil rights question, against the filibuster but votes for it, for a civil rights bill provided it has no teeth. This movement has exposed Kennedy's secret pact with the Ku Klux Gov. Patterson of Alabama; pushed Humphrey forward on civil rights, and put the fear of God in Nixon.

Isolation of the Dixiecrats and smashing the Republican-Dixiecrat anti-labor, anti-Negro coalition remain central goals of the civil rights forces in 1960. The fight for federal intervention against the Dixiecrats in the South now will help to create the conditions for the election of a President and a Congress which will lend a bold helping hand to the Negro people in the South as Roosevelt did to the CIO in the thirties. This means in the first place upping the ante for the election of labor, Negro, Puerto Rican and Mexican Americans to Congress and the state legislatures, starting with the Spring Democratic Party primaries.

Calling for an eventual labor-Negro based third party is no longer confined to a few Communist Paul Reveres riding among the masses warning them against the monopoly-dominated two-party system. The cynical performance of Republicans and Democrats in Washington is driving this idea deep and wide among the masses. The lessons of the Negro voters league were drawn vividly before us by Comrade Lightfoot yesterday.

The Negro upsurge alone—not to mention the crucial question of peace—adds a new importance to the question of running Communist candidates, and to the necessity of our Party waging a vigorous election campaign this year.

Conditions are ripe for a resounding success in the South. The struggle is taking place in an international setting of the increasing superiority of the socialist camp, led by the Soviet Union in the first place, by China and the flourishing People's Democracies. It has the sympathy of the popular forces in all the capitalist countries. It has the backing of the colonial liberation movements in Asia and Africa and Latin America, especially the newly independent countries of Guinea and Ghana and Cuba. In fact, in the words of Mrs. Roosevelt, "The Negro students

absence of fear expressed in this widely quoted statement of a Negro minister who led his congregation into a raving crowd of white hoodlums: "In my mind, I had given up everything, my wife, my children, my life."

These youth have brought to this struggle a will to win, whatever the costs, on the sheer strength of their moral and economic power, and upon the righteousness of their cause. The eight Negro students in Tallahassee who preferred jail to fines for "disturbing the peace" show that jail is no object. Prison terms, like those served prematurely by Communist Smith Act defendants are becoming a mass insignia of honor. Each of these Negro youths knows stoically that he or she may never leave a lunch counter alive. Such dedication and discipline displayed by these youngsters are common only to the working class when it knows what it's about.

The southern Negro students are animated by an idealism and a wholesale zeal, whose contagion is spreading throughout the land. Hitherto such idealism had almost been squelched by the rottenness and opportunism of decadent American capitalism. The students' fight to rekindle the dim light of a democracy in our country is today's best hope of inspiration for poetry, art, music and for the noblest aspirations of the American people.

The triumphant liberation movements of the colored peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America, especially in Cuba, have been absorbed by these youth and their parents and are merged with their own aspirations in America. This imbues them with a new self-confidence. The world-shaking developments are too fresh in the minds of these young people to be blotted out by the cynical pattern of adjustment to jim-crowism violently imposed upon their fathers and mothers over the last decades. The stubborn stand of these students is: if the governor of North Carolina can fete Sekou Toure and his wife, why can't we get a cup of coffee at a public lunch counter?

The Negro students are not so accessible to the economic reprisal of mass firings as are their parents; and so at this moment life hands the toga of leadership over to them. Obviously they're not immune from reprisals; but they have nothing to lose but the chains of jim-crow. They have manhood status and a new dimension to their education to gain.

Working class youngsters are the most solid backbone of any youth movement and that fact should never be forgotten. But one should see the unique militant and leading role played by student youth in this concrete situation, in much the same way as students in national liberation movements all over the world.

At least three possible alternative directions lie before the lunch counter sit-ins in the South, all interrelated. First, the course now being followed by the illegal Dixiecrat regimes—that is, to smash the whole movement, through violence, terror, the jails, and the use of the armed might of all agencies of the state power. Their aim is to close down all channels of democratic and peaceful change. That is not working. The movement lives and grows, utilizing even the President's recent blubbering reaffirmation of the students' right to picket. Secondly, the Dixiecrat regimes, in collusion with Northern big business, can shut down every commercial place where sit-ins are started. But that could lead to a serious paralysis of the South, and fantastic consequences might result from the inventiveness of the Negro students. There is great power in what civil disobedience and non-violent protests can do, once fully unleashed and carried to its logical conclusion.

Finally, they can back up, stop segregation, and integrate, which is the main objective of the student-led mass upsurge.

That victories can be won can be seen from the publicly celebrated integration in the lunch counters in San Antonio, Texas; in Nashvile, Tenn., and the major breakthrough in the official white South, when Governor Collins of Florida made a public statement of moral condemnation of segregation at lunch counters. Recently, there was open divergency between the rabid segregationist Governor Vandiver of Georgia and Mayor Hartsfield of Atlanta in replying to the noble declaration of principles issued by the Negro students of that city.

But these victories, though important and encouraging, are extremely limited and partial. There's still a long way to go and the many problems before this movement are characteristically difficult, complex and formidable. They are not easy to solve especially under such unfavorable circumstances. Total victory requires the all-out self-interest assistance from fair-minded citizens on a nationwide scale, in the first place, from organized

the jim-crow system in the South. I can think of not a single task facing the Negro people and their relatively few active white allies in the South which are not the responsibility of the Negro, labor and white democratic forces in the North, whether picketing, challenging the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition, the use of the political and economic mass power, through the whole gamut of people's weapons. Indeed, in the North conditions are more possible for the use of all these weapons, and there are some not yet available to the Southern Negroes. If only a handful of students picket Woolworth and Kress in South Carolina, then in Harlem, the South Side, in Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Detroit, why do these stores have a single customer! In northern white working class communities, a qualitative break through is necessary, and in many urban centers, stoppages should be considered. Actions should be fought for which give every Negro and white progressive something to do. Is it not strange and challenging that in New York where one million Negroes alone, not to mention 650,000 Puerto Ricans, live, and a multi-national labor movement of a million and a half, the racist trial of Powell can proceed unprotested amidst all this power potential!

Does it not prick all our consciences that the Dixiecrats can truthfully taunt the North over jim-crow housing ghettoes, job discrimination, the lack of Negro representation and school integration—when in fact the North, from L. A. to Mass., should be setting an example of first-class citizenship in all areas of life?

The North should become the arsenal of the freedom struggle in the South both by support and by example.

Our Party greets the fact that what we said 30 years ago is now generally accepted throughout the country: the South is the decisive battleground of the struggle for democracy in the U.S. Now we must help the country draw the practical conclusions from this truth—in terms of decisive assistance to the democratic upsurge in the South.

6. *The* 1960 *Elections.* The Negro people's upsurge has already intervened in the elections, helping to shape the choice of candidates with plans for even more dramatic intervention. The scheduled Negro people's march on both National Party conventions in July is of the greatest moment. Here, indeed,

South. Only through the expansion of democracy can the labor movement enhance its authority, its political and economic power, and its organizational strength. And the banner of that expansion is borne today by the student-led Negro upsurge in the South. Even George Meany declares that the Dixiecrats are the common enemy of both the Negro people and the labor movement. The rub is that such statements and the manifold resolutions of the AFL-CIO remain on paper. This can only reflect the fact that the labor movement does not understand its own self-interest, that they have more to gain from smashing the jim-crow system than even the Negroes, if for no other reason than there's more white workers than Negroes. It is also a bread and butter question—the low wages secured by run-away shops in the South are made possible by the double oppression of the Negro. The same Republican-Dixiecrat coalition that betrayed civil rights legislation in the last Congress, passed the anti-labor Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin law. Given the initiative and will, the membership and many leaders can break through all over the country with deeds, like the mass demonstration called by the Central Trades Council in New York for May 17, anniversary of the desegregation decision. The fight for Negro-white unity by the AFL-CIO means support not only of the two million organized Negro workers, but to the whole dynamic Negro people's movement.

Morally, organized labor is involved, for it must cleanse the stench of the slave market from its own ranks. This is no peripheral question, it goes to the heart of the labor movement. The racist attacks of Meany upon Randolph and Powell, neither one of which has been retracted, are anti-labor, and slanderously misrepresent the vital interest of the labor movement. Meany is behind the times and does not reflect the dynamic fighting needs of organized labor today.

Finally, support of the budding Negro American Labor Council, which has a special role to play both in the ranks of organized labor and in the Negro people's movement, is a practical test and responsibility of the whole organized labor movement.

The greatest single immediate need of the epic Negro struggle in the deep South, on every terrain and level of battle, is the bold and aggressive support by the 17 million organized workers.

5. *The North.* The support of the North, including East and West, can be decisive in the battle against segregation and

labor, and also from white democratic-minded Americans, irrespective of their race, creed, color, political affiliation or national origin, and from their Negro brothers and sisters in the North, East, and West. This is the path to involving the millions on a thousand different fronts in 10,000 different ways as called for by our General Secretary, Comrade Hall, at the Party's 17th National Convention.

For the coming six months preceding our next National Committee meeting, these, we submit, are the main arenas of the conflict where all the massive and united strength of labor and the people should be concentrated:

1. *First and foremost is all-out direct support to the southern Negro people's movement itself.* That entails not only political and moral support, but material and financial aid. The cost to the Negro students and the movement generally of organizing, coordination, publications, leaflets, and advertisement, meeings, of bail, fines, lawyers, appeals, transcripts, of picketing and other such activities, already approaches a quarter of a million dollars, and it will mount rapidly as the struggle spreads and moves forward. This money can be sent to the NAACP, the movement's legal arm, to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, its ideological center, or to the Committee for the Defense of Martin Luther King and the struggle for freedom in the South, or to the students themselves, all of which collect funds for the students and other non-violent victims of the courts.

Practical support should be mobilized, though it expresses itself in many different forms.

2. *Congress.* The shameful skullduggery and disgusting shenanigans taking place around civil rights legislation in the House and Senate can, by no stretch of the imagination, be called a battle. It is a ridiculous farce; it ought to be condemned and exposed. Such goings-on are something more than the antics of the wicked; they are the degeneracy of a social system and even honest men become imprisoned by them.

The refusal of the so-called Democratic liberals to fight, has in effect permitted the Republican-Dixiecrat coalition to take over. In one degree or another, both parties are guilty of passing a bill which will hardly be worth the paper it's written on. The Senate is moving relentlessly and surely, unless the people intervene, toward a further watering down of an already

watered down bill.

The net effect of this monstrosity will be a conspiracy to prevent the federal government from intervening against the illegal Dixiecrat power. This is being done in the Senate and House—by agreement.

Our Party, I submit, should help expose this subterfuge, call for defeat of any worthless scrap of paper, and put forward the demand that a stand-up-and-be-counted vote be taken by every Senator and Representative on a measure of substance, however it fares.

A law of some substance would be a defeat for the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition and jim-crow system in the South. To the last this should be fought for.

But it is becoming ever more apparent that the whole ground of federal intervention must be changed. The decisive thing is the enforcement of the law, the laws now available. The question of federal intervention cannot be allowed to remain on the Dixiecrat terms, that nothing can be done until some more unenforced laws are passed.

The Supreme Court ruling of 1954 had little real meaning until federal troops went to Little Rock. Today the two-bit Hitlers who rule Newton, Ga., in the Black Belt, have already defied any civil rights bill even before it is passed. "It will make no difference," the Newton Dixiecrat registrar told the press. He probably couldn't read the law if it was passed, but is another law going to make the difference with the thousands like him in the South?

Preparations should be made now, beginning with our Party, for adequate meaningful civil rights legislation in the next Congress. The American people deserve better than to be quibbling and dividing over which of different bills is most worthless. A real civil rights bill with teeth should be popularized now for the new Congress in 1961.

3. *Defend Negro leadership.* The income tax prosecution of Martin Luther King in Alabama, and Adam Powell in New York, have drawn the line even thinner between the South and the North, in the oppression of the Negro. Both actions are outright political persecution, no matter how the legal technicalities fall. Into this category falls Daisy Bates, whose paper in Little

Rock was forced into suspension by the White Citizens Council, and Hulan Jack, highest ranking Negro official in the country, whom the City of New York tried to railroad on an illegal indictment. This is not to mention Harry T. Moore and his wife, NAACP leaders, who were bombed to death in Florida, with not one arrest made, Gus Courts in Mississippi, nor Mack Parker, who in death became a leader of the living.

In singling out Martin Luther King, and Adam Powell, the white supremacists chose the ideological leader of the non-violent movement in the South, and the principal rough-and-ready champion of the Negro in the North. Plainly this is a division of labor between the federal and state governments to behead the Negro people's movement, starting with their most brilliant spokesmen, and all under cover of the law. Will it be Randolph next, or Jackie Robinson, or Wilkins or Belafonte? Or are the racists leaving Randolph to the bootlicking Meany, who is conducting his own private campaign to keep pro-labor Powell from being the first Negro to head the decisive Labor and Education Committee in the House?

Meanwhile, the federal government continues the cruel imprisonment of Henry Winston, under circumstances where a medical release is automatic for white prisoners. It has virtually wrecked his robust physique perhaps beyond repair and holds him even as a crippled warning to Negro leaders who get out of line. Of course, Winnie is sustained by his indomitable spirit, and by the hope that burns in every human heart.

But the terror against the Negro people—against a King or Powell or an NAACP—can never be lifted as long as Winston remains in federal custody—nor should this government, out of sheer humanitarianism, ever lift its head among civilized nations.

The warnings issued by our Party upon the first Smith Act convictions that the Communists were only the first—these warnings were all too true. But we subordinate that moment of history to the need to unite with all against this campaign of legal beheading of the Negro people's movement. And we see now the potential political, economic and moral power of the Negro people, with their allies, to free every victim and to stop their persecution.

4. *The labor movement.* The future of the labor movement is being decided on the battle ground of segregation in the deep